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PRESENTATION  
OF THE  
G O L D M E D A L S,

AWARDED RESPECTIVELY TO MR. WM. JOHN HAMILTON AND  
M. ADOLPH ERMAN.

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Addressing the first of these gentlemen the President said :—

“MR. WM. JOHN HAMILTON,—The Council of the Royal Geographical Society having awarded to you the medal of our founder, King William IV., I have great pleasure in explaining the grounds upon which they offer to you this token of their high estimation of your services to geographical science.

“This medal is granted for your successful and well-matured labours upon the physical geography, geology, and antiquities of Asia Minor, Armenia, and Pontus, consigned in a work which has obtained for you a high place among those who devote their services to the advancement of knowledge.

“It is now nine years since you first proposed to examine that region so famous in ancient history, but so little explored by modern travellers.

“To prepare you in clearing away the obscurities which hung over the antiquities of that classic ground, you were, indeed, so fortunate as to have at your right hand your own parent, my esteemed predecessor in this chair, and aptly did he train up his son in the way he should go. His learned suggestions were, I know, the first stimulus to your travels, as they were also the chief means of enabling you to overcome many of the difficulties which were likely to beset your path.

“I know you will pardon what I consider a laudable pride on my own part when I advert to the fact that, in affording you all the geological assistance in my power before you commenced your journey, I made you known to Mr. Strickland, the companion of your earlier travels, whose great proficiency in natural history as well as geology rendered him a fitting person to combine with you in producing a complete work upon the region to be explored.

“Though, owing to a family affliction, your colleague was compelled to return home after a space of several months, the memoirs which were offered in your joint names to the Geological Society, and which have now found a place in its Transactions, are full proofs of the vigour employed in your researches, and of the accuracy of the conclusions at which you both arrived.

“Deprived of your friend—beset with the difficulties which neces-

sarily encompass all explorers of the East, and at one time the victim of severe illness—still were you undaunted; and you held steadily on, in the firm resolve to complete the object of your mission. In proportion, therefore, to the obstacles which you vanquished, ought we to estimate the value of the methods by which you worked out, chronometer in hand, the relative position of numerous places, rivers, lakes, and hills, many of them previously ill laid down upon maps, the zeal with which you amassed specimens of the rocks, and the patience and acumen with which you recognised the sites of several lost cities, by the examination of their inscriptions. And here I may remind the Society of the following important geographical points which you established:—The correct delineation of the course of the Rhyndacus and the Macestus, through the ancient provinces of Mysia and Bithynia; the form of the southern coast of the Black Sea, from Trebisond to Sinope; and the discovery of the site of the mining operations of the ancient Chalybes of Apollonius Rhodius, and of their modern successors; the site of the ancient city of Isaura, and the correct delineation of the Lakes of Trogitis and Caralitis in its immediate vicinity; the map of the Catececaumene, a region which, with your associate Strickland, you showed to be a very counterpart in geological structure to the extinct volcanoes of central France.

“Not satisfied, however, with rendering us familiar with the central and northern portions of Asia Minor, your *reconnaissance* of Armenia, pushed to the foot of Ararat, has had an important bearing both on physical geography and geology; for whilst you determined the height of the plateau of Kars, you proved that, surrounded by rocks of plutonic and ‘quasi’ volcanic characters, this elevated district (3000 feet above the sea) is essentially composed of beds of marine shells of comparatively recent date—thus showing that a region, occupied by some of the earliest of the human race, had undergone great mutations of outline during one of the most recent geological periods. This phenomenon has since been completely established, in relation to adjacent territories around the Caucasus, by the explorations of M. Dubois de Montepereux.

“Pursuing your inquiries to the S.E., you achieved, amid the hills of Cappadocia, that which must be always considered a real triumph for a field geographer, in being the first to ascend, and correctly to determine, by barometrical admeasurement, the true altitude of Mount Argæus, which you ascertained to be 13,000 feet above the sea.

“In the same region you further established that the river Melas, instead of flowing eastward into the Euphrates, as stated in our copies of Strabo, in reality runs N.W. into the Halys. Again on the borders of Cappadocia and Phrygia, you were the first to explore the shores of the Great Salt Lake, called Kotch Kessa (the Tataa Palus of the ancients), and to prove that, fed by streams which flow through a country of rock salt and gypsum, this mass of water (which has no outlet) owed its saline properties to ancient geological causes. Lastly, you made an important correction of all previous maps, by showing the non-existence of the supposed southern source and branch of the Halys.

“Had these your efforts been but simply announced, they would

alone have entitled you to our grateful thanks; but, unlike the soldier, the geographer cannot win unfading laurels in the field alone. To your laborious survey, you added, therefore, years of patient study, and, by comparing and condensing your observations, you finally produced those volumes and that map which have earned for you the distinction this day conferred upon you. Clear and unpretending in style, the Researches in Asia Minor have stood the test of criticism, both at home and abroad, and have elicited from competent judges their warmest approbation.

"In handing to you the Medal, which bears the effigy of the previous sovereign of this nation of real travellers, I am sure I shall render it still more prized by publicly stating, that the illustrious chief of living geographers, Baron Humboldt himself, expressed to me personally his decided opinion, that you were pre-eminently entitled to the honour you have now obtained.\*

"May you, then, my valued friend, live long to enjoy your well-earned reputation, and may those public men among whom you are now engaged, appreciate as I do the value of researches which, from the clearness of arrangement, ability, firmness, and good sense, with which they were accomplished, are the surest test of your being well qualified to perform the duties of any station in life in which you may be called upon to serve your country."

Mr. HAMILTON, in reply, said—

"Mr. President—In thanking you for the honour this day conferred on me in the name of the Royal Geographical Society of London, and for the flattering terms in which you have announced to me the award of the Founder's Medal, I have the greatest difficulty in expressing the satisfaction and gratitude which I experience in receiving such a distinguished mark of their approbation.

"That my labours in the field, and my subsequent exertions in preparing the result of those labours for publication, should have been considered worthy of such an honour, is, indeed, more than a sufficient recompense for the dangers, difficulties, and disappointment which the traveller who would explore untrodden paths in eastern countries must be prepared to meet with.

"When I consider the high position which the Journals of this Society hold amongst the literary and scientific societies of Europe, I do, indeed, feel proud that my name will henceforth be associated with those who have contributed something towards rescuing from loss and oblivion some of the historical monuments of ancient days, and who have fixed the position of towns whose names were formerly only known through the ancient writings and coins. This medal which I hold in my hand possesses also an additional merit, from the circumstance of its being presented to me by you, whose friendship I have so long enjoyed and appreciated, and from whom I received the first suggestions which directed me towards the classic regions of Lydia and the Cataceaumene.

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\* In reference to this opinion of Baron Humboldt, I am glad to see that a German translation of Mr. Hamilton's '*Asia Minor*' has recently been published at Berlin.

"But, Sir, after the flattering manner in which you have alluded to what I *have* done, I trust I may be permitted to allude for a few moments to some of the many points which still remain to be investigated in Asia Minor. Amongst these the courses of the rivers are most important, and are the chief desiderata of geographers. The Halys, formerly the boundary between the kingdoms of Lydia and of Persia, is still very imperfectly known throughout a considerable portion of its course. The drainage of the great central plateau of Asia Minor, extending nearly 200 miles from E. to W., and 150 miles from N. to S., is still only partially known. In the N.W. portion this drainage is effected by the Sangarius, and the several sources of this river also are still unexplored. In the southern and eastern portion of the plateau there is no natural drainage whatever through the ranges of Mount Taurus, which forms an insuperable barrier. The rivers which flow into the plain are either lost in the great salt lake of Kodji Hissar, or are absorbed by evaporation, or they escape under the Taurus into the Mediterranean by means of subterranean passages or katabothra. These still invite further examination. The short rivers also, which flow from the south slope of the Taurus into the Mediterranean, are very little known, and their exploration could not fail to lead to the discovery of many ancient sites. It might also be an interesting subject for inquiry how far the sources of these rivers correspond with the katabothra on the northern slopes of the Taurus. Allow me to add one word more on the loss I sustained by the necessity which compelled Mr. Strickland to return home, and to which you have alluded. Both as a geologist and as a naturalist he would have added interest to these researches in Asia Minor, and I can only regret that his name is not associated with my own, as a joint author, on the title-page of my volumes.

"Once more, Sir, I beg leave to thank you and the Society for the honour which you have this day conferred upon me, and to say that I consider this medal as the greatest reward which can be bestowed on a British traveller."

On the adjudication of the Patron's Medal to Professor Adolph Erman, the President thus addressed the Society:—

"The medal placed at our disposal by the bounty of Her Majesty, our Most Gracious Patron, has been adjudicated to Professor Adolph Erman, for the very remarkable results in physical geography, meteorology, and terrestrial magnetism, which he has communicated in his work, entitled *Travels Round the World* ('*Reise um die Erde*').

"To sum up the chief merits of Adolph Erman in a few sentences is a difficult task, and yet I must endeavour to point out the great features of his works. If, indeed, I only referred you to the analyses of his labours which have been given in the 6th and 9th volumes of the Journal of this Society, you might find in them alone a full justification of the award of the Council. The geographer who has made magnetic and meteorological observations across the great continent of Russia and Siberia, and thence by Kamtschatka round Cape Horn to Europe—who in that long journey, and in excursions to the Icy Sea on the North, and to the Wall of China on the South, correctly determined the altitude

of numberless places, and reformed our ideas of the relative heights and geographical outlines of large tracts, whether near the mouth of the Obe, or in the remote Kamtschatka, must, indeed, have the strongest claims upon practical geographers; and I rejoice in occupying this chair at a time when our Council has thought fit thus to record their sense of the importance of the labours of this distinguished Prussian.

"The outset of Adolph Erman on his adventurous travels—all of them executed at his own expense—recalls to our recollection that day when the Diet or Storthing of Norway set a noble example to Europe, in sanctioning the researches of their countryman Hansteen into the magnetic condition of the earth; for during that part of his journey which extended into Siberia, our Medallist was the companion of the eminent Norwegian philosopher.

"In viewing M. Adolph Erman as a magnetician, it would be quite enough for me to state, that my illustrious friend the Baron Humboldt, who more than all others has generalized and enlarged the scope of this science, having by his own observations in Siberia closely scrutinized the data afforded by M. Erman, is unhesitatingly of opinion that they are of the very highest value both in respect to terrestrial magnetism and astronomical geography. At the same time I have a real pleasure in doing justice to M. Erman from the mouths of our own countrymen, by quoting an extract from a Report to the British Association, in 1837, prepared by that very competent judge Colonel Sabine, who has himself so largely extended our acquaintance with this department of science, and who has so successfully co-ordinated the observations of his contemporaries and his own:—

"'The complete series of M. Erman's magnetic determinations (says Colonel Sabine) is the most extensive contribution yet made \* to the experimental department of magnetical science; nor can we rate its value too highly, since it furnishes us with consecutive determinations of dip, variation, and intensity, by the same highly qualified observer, and with the same excellent instruments, extending through all the meridians of the globe, and from the Arctic circle in Siberia to nearly 60° of south latitude; the whole of this distance being traversed in the course of two years, and the track completely marked by the frequency of the observations.' †

"To these remarks I would add, that researches at once so extensive and so exact could scarcely have been made without tending to general conclusions of considerable importance; and those to which M. Erman was led may be stated in his own words, from a communication which he addressed, shortly after his return, to the Imperial Academy of Sciences at St. Petersburg:—

"'Ces indications suffiront pour prouver que l'ancienne théorie, qui ne suppose *qu'un seul axe magnétique*, est absolument en défaut pour les lois de l'intensité de la force magnétique. On peut en tirer la conséquence intéressante, que la position des deux poles magnétiques n'est pas la seule qui règle les phénomènes dans les différentes parties du

\* Extract from Report in the Vol. of the Brit. Association, 1837.

† Since Colonel Sabine's report was written we have had still more extensive contributions from Sir James Ross and the Antarctic Expedition.

globe; mais qu'il existe encore une cause secondaire qui exerce sur les loix de l'intensité une influence si puissante qu'elle en efface presque tous les caractères déduits par la théorie.'

"It is thus most remarkable to find that at this early period (1831) M. A. Erman actually deduced from his own independent observations, conclusions in strict accordance with those which are now generally gaining ground, as the results of the still more extensive researches which have been subsequently undertaken. They are, indeed, anticipations which afford the strongest proofs of the sound reasoning of a truly philosophic mind.

"Next let us view M. Erman as a meteorologist:—

"'The knowledge (says the distinguished Bessel) that the mean height of the barometer is not precisely the same at different points strictly at the level of the sea, was first obtained by an investigation by Adolph Erman in 1831, in which he showed, partly from his own observations made in his travels round the earth, and partly from the observations of others in Northern Asia and America, and on board the Russian corvette *Krothoi*, commanded by Captain Hagemeister, first—that in the zones of the trade winds, the barometer stands higher at the boundary most distant from the equator than at the boundary which is nearest to it; and, secondly, that the mean height of the barometer is different in different meridians. The first result rests on observations collected in passing eight times through the zone of the trade winds; and has since been corroborated in Herschel's astronomically-memorable voyage to the Cape of Good Hope. The second result rests on a comparison of observations made in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans: the differences amount to several lines, and leave no doubt that *the mean height of the barometer at the level of the sea is different at different points of the earth's surface*, and depends on the geographical latitude and longitude of the place.'\*

"Lastly, if we regard M. Adolph Erman as an astronomical geographer and explorer of distant lands, we must all admit that he stands in the very highest rank. It is in the perusal of such important works as the '*Asie Centrale*' of Baron Humboldt, that the general reader has become acquainted with some of the chief additions he has made to positive knowledge. As a traveller who has merely put his foot, as it were, within the edge of the circle of the Siberian continent, I have, I confess, a sincere admiration for the man, whose unremitting skill and untiring zeal not only carried him through such wild tracts, but enabled him to make the many astronomical observations, which have so essentially enriched and corrected our previous maps. Take, for example, one point alone, in connexion with the Ural chain, of which I have some knowledge. The north-eastern termination of these mountains, where they take the name of Obdorsk, which had long ago been explored by Sujeff, under the direction of Pallas, were placed, upon all our maps, 3<sup>d</sup> 37' too far to the E., an error corrected only by the observations conducted by Erman in that barren region, peopled by a few wild Samoyedes. It is, indeed, needless that I should here mention what must be known to you

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\* Translated from a communication from Bessel, in the *Ast. Nach.*, Nos. 356, 357.

all, that, previous to the travels of this enterprising geographer, we were most imperfectly acquainted either with the physical geography or structure of large portions of Eastern Siberia, whether on the frontier of China or on the shores of the Pacific. Traversing the easternmost regions of Siberia in sledges drawn by rein-deer or dogs, and therefore compelled to travel with small quantities of baggage, M. Adolph Erman was necessarily prevented from transporting with him any cumbrous specimens; but from small fragments of the rocks which he brought back from the Alden mountains, which he determined to have a maximum height of 4216 feet (a collection which I have had the privilege of inspecting), there seems no doubt of the extension of palæozoic and eruptive rocks in that meridian chain, similar to those of the Ural. To the importance of this discovery I shall hereafter advert, when speaking of the probable extension of the gold ores of the Russian empire.

“By his exploration of the volcanic region of Kamtschatka alone, M. Adolph Erman has gained for himself a passport to posterity; since he not only ascertained that volcanoes there range in height from 8000 to near 16,000 feet above the sea, with currents of lava which cease in their descent far above the line of vegetation, but he also made most important corrections in the previously-received latitudes of that peninsula, whereby its form has been greatly changed upon all our maps.

“Thus I have already said much more than enough to convince any one who had not studied the works of M. Erman, that the Council has most wisely selected him to be the receiver of our Patron's medal; and there can, indeed, exist no doubt that, with the exception of the great Humboldt himself, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find a single man in the broad field of explorers, not already honoured with our medal, who is more richly deserving of it.

“Well may Prussia boast of the geographical triumphs she has won, through the exploration of unknown tracts, by her Humboldt and his disciples, Erman and Schomburgk, whilst she points to her Ritter and her Berghaus, as the historical and learned geographers who carry the results of their studious researches from their closets in Berlin into the most distant regions of the globe.

“Had the Chevalier Bunsen been in England, I am certain he would have honoured us with his presence as the representative of the enlightened and beneficent monarch of a kingdom which has given birth to such men, and would have rejoiced in receiving from us the medal for his distinguished countryman, Adolph Erman.”\*

Since the Anniversary, the following reply has been received from Professor Adolph Erman to a letter in which the President announced to him the award of the Council:—

“Allow me to request your kind intervention in expressing to the Royal Geographical Society my warmest thanks, and the extreme though

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\* Baron Von Thile, the resident Prussian Chargé d'Affaires, expressed to Mr. Murchison his great regret at being absent for a few days from London at the period of the anniversary; but the Chevalier Hebler, the Consul-General, attended the anniversary dinner, when the President delivered to him the medal for M. A. Erman.



rather diffident pleasure with which I received the medal they have been so obliging as to award to me.

“Although in his search after truth itself, a real lover of science finds his greatest pleasure, he must still be occasionally troubled by doubts of the utility of the results he has obtained, and of the success which attended their publication.

“No honour, therefore, could be more gratifying to an old employer of Hadley's sextant than the adjudication of a medal adorned with the representation of that noble and powerful instrument—a medal conferred under the patronage of so great and amiable a Queen, by a Society which, of all others in Europe, is most competent to decide upon the performances of that English invention.

“But as rewards too liberally bestowed are apt to cool or relax the zeal of the receiver, I feel myself compelled to assure your Society that their indulgence towards my former attempts in science shall only act as a spur to a further employment of all the means or strength I may possess.”

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